

Tornadoes and Hurricanes: Emergency Support Function (ESF 11)

By Sharron Stewart, NCDA&CS

April 2011 to April 2012, a weather year to remember!

In the spring of 2011, tornadoes ripped through North Carolina from the sandhills to the capital, and finally tearing through the northeastern counties. In the fall of 2011 and then again in January 2012, tornadoes roared into counties in the western piedmont through the foothills and mountains destroying homes, farms and commercial businesses, both large and small. In between the twisters, Hurricane Irene ginned up winds and caused significant flood damage and destroyed homes and agricultural crops in Eastern NC in September. All of these events brought unsettling economic hardships to local residents.

Emergency Support Function (ESF) 11 covers agriculture and natural resources. The support function is a great example of multiple-disciplinary response and the need for strong partnerships. The roles of responders

cover a variety of expertise including crops, plant and animal production; food processing/service and development of biofuels; and the protection and recovery of natural resources. The overlap and interface of these disciplines is crucial to the cycle of food production and environmental sustainability. Therefore, the training and education of the responders is unique and requires extensive collaboration to yield the right skills sets for formation of incident teams.

Since 1999, our capabilities to handle plant, animal and food emergencies have improved tremendously. Responding to some agriculture and food events requires joint federal and state oversight.

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**NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE &
CONSUMER SERVICES**

Emergency Programs Division

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The Good and Bad of Social Media in a Crisis

By Jen Nixon, NCDA&CS

In today's society, information spreads faster than a wildfire -- and at times, misinformation seems to travel even faster. Social media allow us a platform to directly inform the public about worthy causes and create relationships with clients and other industry people. At the same time, everyone is now an eyewitness reporter, with the ability to publish to multiple social media networks and potentially reach thousands of people in a matter of minutes. The viral potential of today's gossip can ruin a reputation, create a celebrity or incite public panic in a frighteningly short amount of time.

While you can't control social media or what people post to the Internet, you can be proactive in monitoring the content and be prepared to respond if necessary, especially during times of crisis. For veterinarians, natural disasters and disease outbreaks are two examples of crisis situations when you may want to be aware of the greater conversation.

The easiest way to monitor a topic is to create a Google alert. When you perform a search in Google, click on News. This will bring up all the news stories or blog posts about your search term. You can sort by relevance or by most recent. At the bottom of the page, you have the option to receive emails whenever new stories about the topic are published, plus you can set the frequency. (As a general business practice, you may want to create Google alerts for your business' name and each of your practicing veterinarians.)

Facebook can be a great tool to communicate and engage with your clients. You can encourage them to post photos of their animals and offer gentle reminders about how to protect their furry friends from vector-borne diseases or other preventable illnesses.

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VRC COORDINATOR	UPCOMING EVENTS:	REQUIREMENTS FOR VRC DEPLOYMENT
Mandy Tolson, DVM Southeastern Region Emergency Programs Veterinarian (252) 813-0989 Mandy.Tolson@ncagr.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Please see our website for future training and activities.• Check out our sheltering webinars now posted on the website!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ICS 100,200, and 700• Biosecurity/PPE Training• Knowledge of NC Emergency Management• Knowledge of Emergency Support Functions• Attendance at VRC Meetings• Sign a Code of Conduct
COMPLETE YOUR VRC REGISTRATION AT WWW.SERVNC.ORG		



When a zoonotic disease hits, you can help calm fears, answer questions and correct misconceptions. It's a little harder to monitor the overall conversation on Facebook because of privacy settings, but daily interaction with your clients on your fan page will help keep you in the conversation and help you remain a trusted subject matter expert.

Twitter has helped bring down governments in the Middle East and brought rescuers to people in Haiti after the earthquake. In the case of a crisis, information and misinformation can spread quickly via Twitter. Fortunately, big issues usually necessitate the use of hashtags. Hashtags are ways to categorize and search for information about a topic. In the case of Hurricane Irene last year, hashtags sprouted for each state affected -- in our case, #IreneNC. As a department, we monitored this hashtag for reports of animal rescue needs and other issues that may have needed a food inspector or other department intervention. There are some useful tools to help you monitor Twitter. In Hootsuite or Tweetdeck, two of the most popular monitoring sites, you can monitor multiple Twitter users, search terms and hashtags at one time.

The other big medium to remember is YouTube. The video site is a great way to humanize a story. If a picture speaks a thousand words, a video speaks millions. There are several inexpensive high definition video cameras that have easy editing software that you can use to create your own videos. At the same time, if you are called out to respond to a crisis, remember that anyone with a cell phone is now a reporter. Emergencies are stressful events, but don't allow yourself to lose your cool. Even if the work is overwhelming, if there is a crowd, excuse yourself until you feel as if you've got it together. Unfortunately, even explainable situations can get blown out of proportion when posted to the Internet.

Social media is our new reality. These tools have the amazing capability to bring us together, but also the same capability to do damage. Using common sense and being aware of the conversation are great starting points.

VRC MISSION: Train and prepare professionals in the animal care community to respond to disaster events (all hazards) that affect both production and companion animals. Our members will serve as a resource for our state and the nation.

NOTES: To see recent news and updates, please visit the VRC website at www.ncvrc.org. If you have questions about the VRC or would like to offer suggestions or articles for future newsletters, contact Mandy at mandy.tolson@ncagr.gov.

Training at NCSU College of Veterinary Medicine

By Dr. Jimmy Tickel, NCDA&CS

If you were a veterinary student just about to transition from classes to clinics, from studying to application of knowledge learned, and from sitting in a classroom to roaming the halls of a clinic, what would be the last courses you would like to take? How about disaster response? Well, that's just what the junior class of veterinary students at NC State's College of Veterinary Medicine did during the last two weeks of spring classes.

For more than six years, the CVM and NCDA&CS Emergency Programs Division have partnered to provide veterinary students training in response that would help them better understand and be prepared to help their communities during disasters. The training is incorporated in the ethics section led by Dr. Dianne Dunning and contains sessions that allow students to learn about their roles during a natural disaster or disease outbreaks – including those involving both animals and humans. The trainings are designed to help students develop personal and professional preparedness plans that will help students avoid becoming victims, and instead, be the critical veterinary care providers that their communities need them to be.

The coursework combines personal safety instruction (Hazardous Materials Awareness training) along with personal protection equipment trainings. The goals of these two trainings are to help students understand how to avoid unsafe situations in disasters and also how to protect themselves and their staff in proper clothing and

protective equipment. The students are also trained with the Companion Animal Mobile Equipment Trailer (CAMET) so that they feel comfortable using this asset. Finally, the students are also instructed in Psychological First Aid which deals with how to take care of themselves and others to avoid the mental stress and even trauma that can be found in stressful situations.

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Veterinary students practice using the CAMET.

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Though the students receive certification as veterinary responders allowing them to deploy to other states on behalf of North Carolina to help animals and people in disasters, the ultimate goal of the training runs much deeper than just a certificate. As CVM graduates take various positions in the industry, their knowledge and application of disaster and disease preparedness will serve not only themselves, but also their communities and clients. One of the things that is emphasized to the students is that veterinary practitioners are absolutely critical to communities because they represent the sole source of veterinary care. If they do not work within their communities during a disaster, then a huge chasm is created. Once the students have completed this training they are fully credentialed and are offered the opportunity to join NCVRC.



Veterinary students practice donning and doffing personal protective equipment.

Dr. Lewis Dodds Joins the Emergency Programs Team

By Dr. Kelly Jeffer, NCDA&CS



We are pleased to introduce Dr. Lewis Dodds, a new member of our Emergency Programs (EP) team. As the Mountain Region EP Veterinarian, Dr. Dodds' territory covers 21 counties in the far western portion of the state (counties west of Ashe to Rutherford). He comes to us from Kentucky where he was a field Veterinary Medical Officer with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He brings a great deal of experience to North Carolina, including work in regulatory medicine, large animal private practice and the pharmaceutical industry. (To view the full EP field staff map, please visit www.ncagr.gov/oep.)

Dr. Lewis Dodds and his son Caleb.

County Animal Response Team Spotlight:

Craven and Jones County

By Margaret A. Bell, NCSU CES

Did you know the official hurricane season runs from June 1 to November 30? That's half of the entire year we may have favorable conditions for a hurricane. With hurricane season fast approaching and last year's tornadoes plus Hurricane Irene, we have realized just how important it is to have a plan in place and volunteers ready to go at a moments notice. So, what does that mean for you? That means you need to have a plan and not just for you, but for your pets and your livestock. Have you thought about what you would do if a category five hurricane turned our way at the last minute?

In Jones and Craven counties, there is a plan created by the CART – County Animal Response Team. This team is made up of individuals who have key skills to offer in the aftermath of a natural disaster. Team members include veterinarians, animal shelter supervisors, emergency management, Cooperative Extension agents and volunteers.

At the end of August 2011, Hurricane Irene descended upon eastern North Carolina. We knew she was going to hit hard at the coast. We decided to push forward with our

CART plan and open the animal shelter as a part of the human shelter – a co-location shelter. We had several people bring their dogs with them to the Jones County Civic Center before the storm. We registered them and



Here you see one of the pets sheltered by the CART during the storm.

housed the animals in a separate part of the building in their crates with food and water. Just as we thought the storm was passing over, we started to hear a terrible sound within the building. We looked outside and noticed hundreds of small pieces of insulation blowing all around in front of the building. It was then that we heard the roof blow off of the building where the animals were.

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The Jones County Civic Center during Hurricane Irene.



Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue Training

NCSU College of Veterinary Medicine

By Ashley Barnes, NCSU CVM Class of 2013



RALEIGH, NC (April 20-22, 2012) – Over 60 firefighters, veterinarians, students and members of the equine and cattle community gathered at the NCSU College of Veterinary Medicine to receive specialized training for Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue (TLAER).

The TLAER course involved three days of lectures and live animal emergency exercises. Seasoned horses and a llama were used to simulate a trailer wreck, barn fire and natural disaster aftermath. It was taught by veterinarian Tomas Gimenez, and Urban Search and Rescue Major Rebecca Gimenez.

One Raleigh Battalion Chief said of the event, “We have sought to get this course in the Triangle area for years because North Carolina has a high incidence of tornado damage and is a major thoroughway for interstate large animal transport – especially for horses.” Reduced statewide budgets threatened to keep interested emergency personnel from attending, but veterinary students coordinated sponsorship from local farms and businesses to help fund wider community access to the training.

Please contact Ashley Banes for more information at ashley-banes@gmail.com or 919-448-4131.



Training participants practice large animal rescue techniques.



Pictures courtesy of Koren Kartes (NCSU/CVM/TAU Equine Manager)

Tornadoes and Hurricanes: Emergency Support Function (ESF 11)

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The joint response includes meshing of authorities, finances and sharing of resources as prescribed by statutes. Since all response is local, it is important to maintain a strong community support role through education and training in order to rapidly integrate multiple capabilities for response and recovery efforts at that level. Over the years, local and state first responders have developed capabilities to provide rapid assistance to the impacted areas. The funding to create the resources for response in an all-hazards environment has come from a multitude of federal, state and local initiatives. No one entity has the funding, talent or subject expertise to



This poultry house sustained damage during Hurricane Irene.

manage all-hazards response events. Thus, we have worked collaboratively over the years to achieve our joint goals. Additionally, in catastrophic events there are not enough local resources to move from response to recovery quickly without using the established mutual aid process or requisition of state and federal assets. As stated often, it takes all of us to respond to any event which covers multiple counties and disciplines.

As an example, to assist with animal disaster issues, the state ESF 11 Team has the ability to invoke a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signed between the American Humane Association (AHA) and the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The MOA allows for the state to call in this national resource to assist with pre-event planning, response and recovery missions. AHA resources can be requested by locals through the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) ESF 11 desk or when the state level response is required following a catastrophic event. The missions will be coordinated through the Agriculture EOC. The AHA team was deployed in NC during Hurricane Irene. For the 2012 hurricane season, AHA assets will be stored in North Carolina to provide rapid deployment to East Coast events; another significant partnership that demonstrates the successful work by many agencies and the private sector.

As we look over the last 12 years, we can be proud of the accomplishments by many partners who have contributed to our state's response needs, especially the ESF 11 group with which you are so closely aligned. We can always improve our skills and add more equipment, but we have done well to build the infrastructure as it exists today. Let's remain focused that it is not about us as entities-- it is the mutual goal of being reliable contributors to strong communities which recover and revive quickly.

Be Prepared!

By Dr. Mandy Tolson, NCDA&CS

Hurricane season is quickly approaching. It officially begins on June 1st and continues through November 30th. Since many of us were affected by Hurricane Irene in 2011, we may be looking toward the impending season wondering how to prepare for a potential disaster. Though in North Carolina we often think about hurricanes as the most likely disaster, 2011 reminded us that there are many natural disasters that can affect our state. Last year we experienced devastating tornadoes, wildfires and even felt an earthquake. Natural disasters can affect not only our lives and practices directly through damage, but can also lead to fewer normal business days.

Though natural disasters can affect our lives and businesses in many ways, we also have to consider other potential disasters that we may face. Man-made disasters are just as common. This can be anything from vehicle accidents to hazardous material spills. Not every veterinarian or practice may be affected by these directly, but if your practice is on a busy highway, it is always a possibility.

So, what do you need to do to be prepared? Start now! Don't wait for a disaster to think about what you need to do. If you think about the most common disasters that your practice may face before the disaster, you can help to ease the situation if and when it occurs. This may seem like a daunting task, but you do it with emergencies and other stressful situations throughout your normal business day. First, it is important to know the people in your community, your clients and who you would need to contact. Knowing your local emergency manager will help you stay in contact with the response effort in any local or state disaster. They will also be happy to know you in case they need your professional expertise in a local disaster. Become involved with your local County Agriculture Response Team (CART). This is the group of individuals who will respond to a local agriculture disaster. This team may consist of agriculture extension agents, animal control, local humane groups, emergency management and more. Knowing these people before a disaster is very helpful.

When you are thinking about your disaster plans, remember to think about your practice, your patients, clients and your staff. Not all of your staff may be able to come into work. Your clients may not be able to get to your practice for their pets' medical treatment. Your practice may have hospitalized or boarded pets that can't leave. Having alternative housing and medical treatment options is important in case your facility is affected. It is important to plan for how to handle having additional animals in-house at the same time you are short staffed. Every facility and practice will have its own set of hurdles to overcome. These are just a few things to think about. Take the time to think through the challenges your practice may face.

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Be Prepared!

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During a statewide disaster the state's Emergency Operation Center (EOC) will be activated. This will be the central command center for both county and state emergency management. With the activation of the state EOC, the state's Agriculture Emergency Operations Center (AgEOC) will also be activated. If you need assistance during a disaster, your local emergency management will make requests and contact the State EOC and AgEOC as appropriate.

The NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Emergency Programs Division has four field veterinarians and two specialists who work with counties in preparing for disasters. If you have any questions about preparing for disasters, please contact the EP employee assigned to your region. To identify your regional contact, please visit www.ncagr.gov/oep/.

Other online resources that may be helpful:

www.ncagr.gov/oep/sheltering/

www.ncagr.gov/oep/sheltering/training.htm

www.ncvrc.org



County Animal Response Team Spotlight: Craven and Jones County

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We were able to safely move all of the animals to another building and relocate our human shelter. As you can imagine, the people and animals that attended this shelter came from homes that would not have fared even as well as the Civic Center did. It is important for your county to have a plan in place and volunteers available. It is also helpful to have a good working relationship with local government agencies, especially the Department of Social Services and the local Red Cross, who will be in charge of opening a shelter once given the authority to do so.

If you would like to be put on the volunteer list for Jones or Craven County, please contact the NC Cooperative Extension Service at 252-

448-9621 and speak with Livestock Agent Margaret Bell. She will gather your contact information and contact you if you are needed for the shelter. In Jones County, the shelter location is at the Civic Center located on Highway 58 South.



Debris outside the shelter during the storm.